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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 196th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 3 March 1993, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE HELD AT NEW YORK ON 25 AND 26 JANUARY 1993

2. The CHAIRMAN, reporting on the preparatory meeting, said that Working Paper No. 1, the provisional programme, was the outcome of consultations with the Committee's Bureau; it had been prepared in response to the recent concern expressed by several NGOs on the need to improve both the quality and level of participation at symposia and to ensure better implementation of the recommendations of participating NGOs. He recommended its adoption by the Committee.

3. The provisional programme would permit an examination of the current situation in the occupied territories and the need to protect the Palestinian people, the ongoing peace process and the formulation of efficient strategies by the NGOs concerned.

4. The theme proposed for the symposium to be held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 30 June to 2 July 1993 was "Building for Peace and Palestine: Priorities for the Second Decade of the NGO Movement". The term "second decade" referred to the fact that the NGOs had begun working on that question for some 10 years and that they felt that so long as the relevant United Nations resolutions were not implemented, they would have a role to play.

5. The draft programme provided for the organization of four round tables at which speakers from Israel, Palestine, the United States and Canada would be invited to make statements and participate in the discussions. The programme also provided for six workshops on specific questions.

6. One of the innovations proposed by the North American Coordinating Committee was the establishment of seven standing committees composed of NGOs involved in areas of activity in which they had special competence. These areas and the names of their organizers were indicated in Working Paper No. 1. The standing committees would ensure that the discussions in the workshops of the symposium were more substantive and would monitor and promote the implementation of the recommendations made by participants.

7. In accordance with established practice, the names of several speakers had been proposed in the provisional programme. The Committee was required to approve those names, leaving open the possibility that other speakers might be proposed following consultations. The Division for Palestinian Rights would ascertain whether all the proposed participants in the round tables, workshops and committees would be available. In its final decision on what invitations should be sent out, the Bureau of the Committee would bear in mind that funds had been allocated by the Organization to cover the travel of six guest speakers.

(The Chairman)

8. Members of the Bureau had been impressed by the determination of NGOs to provide all the assistance possible to the Palestinian people in its struggle for national independence and a Palestinian State. He expressed the Bureau's support for the North American Coordinating Committee's efforts to improve the structure as well as the modalities of the symposium.

9. If there were no comments, the CHAIRMAN would take it that the Committee approved Working Paper No. 1.

10. It was so decided.

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1993 (A/AC.183/1993/CRP.1)

11. Mr. CAMILLIERI (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the Bureau had held consultations regarding the draft programme of work for 1993, and it had been finalized at a meeting of a working group of the Committee on 25 February 1993. Considerable thought had been given to the role to be played by the Committee with the support of the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information. Section I of the draft programme of work summarized the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Section II referred to the recommendations made by the Committee in its previous report and identified a number of priority issues to be addressed by the Committee in 1993 in the light of the political developments of 1992 and the current status of the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. Section III was concerned with activities of the Committee and of the Division for Palestinian Rights, including the establishment of a computer-based information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL).

12. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) said that the draft programme of work seemed to be in keeping with the mandates of the resolutions emanating from the General Assembly and merited the Committee's full approval. In connection with the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights, the Committee could play a special role in energizing the efforts of non-governmental organizations in order to achieve a political impact. He was gratified that the focus of the Committee's work continued to be on mobilizing public opinion in Europe and the United States rather than preaching to the converted. The Committee should try to maximize its political work and expand its activities beyond pro forma symposia and seminars.

13. The Observer for Palestine was keeping the Committee informed of what was happening on the ground. He wondered whether the Secretary-General's special representative on the Middle East could be invited to appear before the Committee so as to help strengthen the Committee's role.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee's agenda was broad enough to include the question of the World Conference on Human Rights. The Division for Palestinian Rights could make arrangements for the Secretary-General's special representative on the Middle East to appear before the Committee. He agreed that the reports of the Observer for Palestine were useful and encouraged him to continue to brief the Committee regularly on the situation and on the position of the PLO.

15. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that he supported the proposals made by the representative of Guyana. It was important for the Committee to look into ways of maximizing its input into the World Conference on Human Rights as a Committee or through the activities of non-governmental organizations concerned with the question of Palestine. He also supported the proposal to invite the Secretary-General's special representative on the Middle East to appear before the Committee and was in favour of issuing similar invitations to high-ranking officials from the Secretariat and political figures of the region.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work for 1993.

17. It was so decided.

18. The CHAIRMAN said that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had agreed to host the European Seminar on the theme of "Assistance to the Palestinian People" from 26 to 29 April 1993 at its headquarters in Paris and initial preparations were under way. The seminar represented a new focus for the Committee's work and had been specifically requested by the General Assembly in resolution 47/170. Consultations were being conducted with a view to encouraging active and concrete participation in the seminar by donor countries, United Nations bodies and agencies and non-governmental organizations already involved in projects of assistance to the occupied Palestinian territory. A planning mission from the Secretariat was now in Paris to make all the necessary arrangements for the seminar. The Bureau would report to the Committee as soon as possible with regard to various aspects of the event.

19. As indicated in the programme of work, the Government of Senegal had agreed to host the African Seminar and the African NGO Symposium in Dakar; the exact dates would be determined at a later stage.

20. In accordance with established practice, the Bureau of the Committee would continue preparations for the various activities indicated in the programme of work and would report back to the Committee in due course.

OTHER MATTERS

21. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the main concern of his delegation continued to be the matter of the Palestinians deported by Israel on 17 December 1992. So far, Israel had not implemented Security Council resolution 799 (1992) nor had the Security Council considered the Secretary-General's report submitted to the Council in pursuance of resolution 799 on 25 January 1993.

22. Since the Committee had adopted a position at its last meeting, there had been some important developments on that subject. The first was the informal consultation meeting of the Security Council on 12 February 1993 to which the President of the Council had summoned the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations. At the subsequent press conference the President had declared that the Palestinian people had never supported those deportations nor had it been party to it and expressed the hope that all members of the Security Council were still committed to the objectives confirmed by their unanimous vote on resolution 799.

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

On 16 February 1993, in his capacity as the Observer for Palestine, he had sent an official letter to the President of the Security Council in which he had made it abundantly clear that no document had been issued by the Council announcing any official action it had taken with respect to the 12 February meeting or since the adoption of resolution 799. In the circumstances, the Security Council was still duty-bound to consider the Secretary-General's report and his recommendations and to guarantee the immediate implementation of the resolution.

23. Another important development was the visit of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Warren Christopher, to the Middle East from 18 to 24 February 1993. His delegation hoped that the visit would lead to positive results and welcomed the new United States position because it should enable the United States to play a major role in the ongoing peace process. For example, the United States and other parties involved in the peace process would attend some bilateral sessions, the United States would submit specific proposals aimed at reconciling differences and secure recognition from both sides of the importance of the peace process.

24. Moreover, the following points had been agreed upon in principle following the meeting of the Palestinian side with the United States side in Jerusalem: the United States would submit a written assurance on the importance of the peace process and on the importance of Jerusalem; the United States would emphasize the illegality of the deportations; Israel would comply with the requirement not to resort to deportations or evictions in the future; Israel would declare its willingness to abide by Security Council resolution 799 (1992) and accelerate the return of all the deportees; the 2,000 Palestinians who had been deported since 1967, would be allowed to return; and Israel would put an end to the human rights violations in the occupied territories.

25. Thus far, no serious efforts had been made to implement the six points. Although a letter had been sent by the United States side in implementation of the first point it had not made any mention of Jerusalem. There had been no positive developments on the Israeli side.

26. Mr. Abbas, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, had recently travelled to Moscow and met Mr. Kozyrev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and some other officials. The Russian Federation, a co-sponsor of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, had a significant role to play in the peace process. He had not yet received details of the meeting, but was confident that the Palestinian position had been conveyed in full to the Russian side.

27. A meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Arab States that were neighbours of Israel, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, would take place in the near future to consider questions relating to the peace process and the deportees and arrive at a unified Arab position.

28. The problem of the deportees must be resolved. Israel had dealt a deadly blow to the peace process by the deportation; until that situation was remedied, the PLO could not participate in the negotiations. The Security Council must make a comprehensive analysis of the Secretary-General's report on the matter and take the necessary measures; Israel's action undermined the credibility of

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

the Security Council and of the United Nations in general. The Committee had a very important role to play in that connection.

29. His delegation would meet with the President of the Security Council shortly to consider the matter and make sure it was included in the Security Council's agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.